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AMORIS VICTIMA.

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AMORIS VICTIMA

BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

LONDON: LEONARD SMITHERS
NEW YORK: GEORGE H. RICHMOND AND CO.
MDCCCXCVII

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I WISH this book to be read as a single poem, not as a collection of miscellaneous pieces. It is an attempt to deal imaginatively with what seems to me a typical phase of modern love, as it might affect the emotions and sensations of a typical modern man, to whom emotions and sensations represent the whole of life. It is a study, under the conditions of many moods, of a particular kind of personality, as it might be acted upon by the travail, exultation, and disaster of the only kind of passion which could be conceived as obtaining persistent dominance over it. Each poem is, I hope, able to stand alone, but no poem has been included without reference to the general scheme of the book, the general psychology of the imaginary hero.

A. S.

LONDON, *September*, 1896.

M134714

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I.

AMORIS VICTIMA.

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AMORIS VICTIMA.

I.

HE who has entered by this sorrow's door
Is neither dead nor living any more.
Nothing can touch me now, except the cold
Of whitening years that slowly make youth old;
Hunger, that makes the body faint; one thought
That ends all memory; for the future, nought.
My future ended yesterday; I have
Only a past, on this side of the grave.
For I have lost you, and you fill the whole
Of life now lost; and I have lost my soul,
Because I have no part or lot in things
That were to be immortal: grave-mould clings
About my very thoughts; and love's dead too.
All that I know of love I learnt of you.

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II.

ALL that I know of love I learnt of you,
And I know all that lover ever knew,
Since, passionately loving to be loved,
The subtlety of your wise body moved
My senses to a curiosity,
And your wise heart adorned itself for me.
Did you not teach me how to love you, how
To win you, how to suffer for you now,
Since you have made, as long as life endures,
My very nerves, my very senses, yours?
I suffer for you now with that same skill
Of self-consuming ecstasy, whose thrill
(May Death some day the thought of it remove!)
You gathered from the very hands of Love.

III.

IS it this weary and most constant heart,
Or only these unquiet nerves, that start
And tremble if I do but think of you?
I know not, but I would to God I knew.
Had I not once a half-delicious grief,
When I believed in you against belief?
But now, when I must doubt your word, your kiss,
When each remembered rapture murmurs "This
Was when she lied, and this was when she lied,"
Yet even doubt is by some doubt denied;
Now, when the madness comes down like a flood,
Poisoning the honest currents of my blood,
Is it desire, love, or this madness, most
That aches in me, to know that you are lost?

IV.

I KNOW that you are lost to me, and yet
I will not think it. If I could but get
This too obsequious heart out of your power
For one forgetting and contracted hour,
This heart that from remembrance has not won
Oblivion or even rebellion!
I must not think: there's safety that one way.
I must not think of you, not even to say
"I have forgotten." I will think of—who?
All other women, since they are not you!
Ah! but that's weakness: can I not be strong,
As you are, in your rage to do me wrong?
O! lest I hate you, let my love have power,
For love's sake, to forget you for one hour!

V.

LOVE turns to hate, they say; and surely I
Have cause enough to hate you till I die.
Do you not hate me? must I not hate you?
Show me the way it's done, and I'll outdo
Your bravest. But what's this? If I surprise,
Not tears, in those inexorable eyes?
Ah! by those tears, think not that we shall bring
So dear a love to be an outcast thing.
Love turns to hate: I would it turned to hate!
We were not then so wholly desolate.
You will not let me love you; yet now, see,
If hate be not impossibility.
What shall we do, O God in heaven above,
Who cannot hate, and yet who may not love?

VI.

I CANNOT do without you: you have been
Too long my only slave, my only queen.
I cannot do without you: you have grown
Part of my flesh, and nearer than my own.
I need you! Speak, be silent, frown or smile,
Only be with me for a little while,
And let your face and hands and hair be kissed,
And let me feel your fingers on my wrist.
I cannot do without you. Other men
Love, bid good-bye, and turn to love again;
I only know I want you, only you,
Only because I want you. If you knew
How much I want you! If you knew how much
I hunger, should I hunger, for your touch?

VII.

DARE I remember, nay, can I forget,
(Would God I could forget them all, and yet
Thank God for this the most, I have not the power!)
Of all the hours of all our love one hour?
It is my glory, as it is my curse,
(Loveliest, best loved out of the universe!)
To have loved, to have been beloved by you, above
All other loving women, made for love.
No woman ever loved me as you loved,
And now that you have from my brows removed
The heavy crown of love, and cast it down,
I cannot stoop to wear a lighter crown.
Having been crowned by you, I abdicate
Kingship, and join the beggars at your gate.

VIII.

IN those mysterious jewels of your eyes,
Wrought with vain truths, and wrought with vainer lies,
When passion made me wizard, I have read,
And turned away, blind with exceeding dread.
I never knew you; you could give your whole
Heart's life, but not the silence of your soul;
I never knew you when you loved me most,
And now that you are that unquiet ghost,
Part of the very element of fire,
A breath, a flame, a shadow of desire,
I know that I shall never ravel out
The vision from the shadowy veils of doubt;
For is it not the pure alone are wise
To read the wizard beryl of your eyes?

IX.

I CANNOT work: I dare not sit alone.
There's not a corner here that has not known
Some moment of you, and your pictured eyes
Pursue me with relentless memories.
Here was the chair you sat in; here we lay
Until your face grew fainter with the day,
And, in a veil of kisses, swooning white,
Fell back into the mystery of night.
'Twas here I kissed you first; 'twas there you said,
"I love you," and, "Would God that I were dead!"
And now, when you are gone for evermore,
I pace between the window and the door,
And, in the feverish folly of despair,
Stand listening for your step upon the stair.

X.

THE white foam rushes back into the night
Of waters; far behind, I see the light
Of ships that come from England; and the sky
Blots out the world beyond. Would God that I
Could so blot out the past I hurry from
Into oblivion and a little foam,
And make for new horizons, as our ship
Sets forward, with the stars for fellowship!
O woman, am I not, for this one hour
Of triumphing waters, freer of your power?
You, lost and left, with England, far behind
The spacious freedom of the sea and wind,
Is it not as a ghost you come to me
Across the wind and moonlight of the sea?

XI.

I HAVE endured a week's oblivion
Of foreign faces, I have seen the dawn
Blush through veiled windows, and not vainly sought
Refuge from your intolerable thought.
Now, as I tread these London streets again,
There grows up softly, from the night and rain,
The same old ghostly haunting of your eyes;
And the old poisonous mist of memories
Rises about me, and the old desire
Quickens along my veins in sharper fire.
O! I am lost, you will not set me free,
Unless I turn again, and seek the sea,
Some vague new world of waters, bounded by
The soft and sudden barrier of the sky.

XII.

THIS is Love's ghost that I have met to-day.
These are the same eyes, and the voice that speaks
The very voice, and those the very cheeks;
And yet, O God! how faint, how far away!
Out of another world you come to me,
And hollow, hollow, hollow as the tomb
Sound the indifferent words that speak my doom;
And hollow, hollow, hollow, can it be
My voice that sounds so strangely in my ears?
You bid me speak, and I, in dumb despair,
Forgetting all my agonies of prayer,
Beckon to you across a mist of tears.
All's over now: I know that you are lost,
And love is dead, for I have met Love's ghost.

XIII.

AND yet, there was a hunger in your eyes,
Once, when you turned upon me suddenly;
And suddenly you turned away from me,
Once, when, evoking other memories,
I said, "You hate me: answer: do you not
Hate me?" and in your silence then I heard
The ruined echo of another word,
Love, Love, that wailed and would not be forgot.
And once you laughed, that laugh I understand,
Sadder than tears, a broken little laugh,
As if a sob had shivered it in half.
And once, when, pausing, I had laid my hand
Upon your hand my hand could always thrill,
The fingers stirred: ah! they remember still.

XIV.

THE way of all transgressors is not hard,
As mine is. Other men have lightly sinned,
And joyously accepted their reward;
And Memory, whistling as an idle wind,
Sang nothing in their ears to follow them
Down the despairing hollows of their nights;
Yet something burns my heart out like a flame
If I but think on those foregone delights.
Why should I suffer, since I did the wrong?
God knows that I repent not. Why should I
Suffer? Take courage, feeble heart, be strong,
Poor heart that whimpers like a cur. O why,
In futile and dishonourable pain,
Moan on the grave of love that you have slain?

II.

AMORIS EXSUL.

I. MOONRISE.

I AM weary of living, and I long to rest
From the sorrowful and immense fatigue of love.
I have lived and loved with a seeking, passionate zest,
And weariness and defeat are the end thereof.

I have lived in vain, I have loved in vain, I have lost
In the game of Fate, and silently I retire.
I watch the moon rise over the sea, a ghost
Of burning noontides, pallid with spent desire.

II. LOSS.

WHAT have I lost in losing you?
Only the savour of all things.
In the same sky the same bird sings,
The same clouds darken in the blue;
Only, all's changed, in losing you!

In losing you, I lose the care
That held me fettered all my days.
I see before me bright new ways
That beckon me, I know not where;
And yet I do not greatly care.

For I have lost, in losing you,
Not you alone, but my own youth,
My hope in fame, my faith in truth,
And all I was to be and do,
And life itself, in losing you!

III. IN THE BAY.

THE sea-gulls whiten and dip,
Crying their lonely cry,
At noon in the blue of the bay ;
And I hear the slow oars drip,
As the fisherman's boat drifts by,
And the cuckoo calls from the hillside far away.

The white birds cry for the foam,
O white birds crying to me
The cry of my heart evermore,
By perilous seas to roam
To a shore far over the sea,
And I would that my ship went down within sight
of the shore!

IV. THE RAT.

PAIN gnaws at my heart like a rat that gnaws at a beam
In the dusty dark of a ghost-frequented house;
And I dream of the days forgotten, of love the dream,
The desire of her eyes unappeased, and the peace of her brows.

I can hear the old rat gnaw in the dark by night,
In the deep overshadowing dust that the years have cast;
He gnaws at my heart that is empty of all delight,
He stirs the dust where the feet of my dreams had passed.

V. IN THE FOREST OF ARQUES.

WHY am I haunted by your hands?
O subtle and mesmeric palms,
That had the power of what strange calms,
Only my spirit understands;
And you, faint fingers thrilling through
With feverish ecstasies subdued
Into the quiet of your mood,
Why is it that I dream of you?

Exiled and outcast, and resigned
To be forgotten, to forget,
Why is it there should one regret
With one desire possess my mind?
That, in these unfamiliar lands,
After the exile and the change,
You might but soothe me with the strange
Familiar comfort of your hands!

VI. FORESHADOWINGS.

IT was your silence that I loved,
Musical pauses of a fine
Remoter harmony that moved
Across your spirit's boundary line.

Ah! in what visions have I heard,
Musical lips, eloquent eyes,
How many a song without a word,
Divine demands, subtle replies!

All that Love ever had to say
Your eyes have said to me, in vain.
Hopeless, estranged, unchanged, to-day
Without a word we meet again.

VII. LOVE AND SLEEP.

I HAVE laid sorrow to sleep,
Love sleeps.
She who oft made me weep
Now weeps.

I loved, and have forgot,
And yet
Love tells me she will not
Forget.

She it was bid me go ;
Love goes
By what strange ways, ah ! no
One knows.

Because I cease to weep,
She weeps.
Here by the sea in sleep,
Love sleeps.

VIII. TWILIGHT.

THE pale grey sea crawls stealthily
Up the pale lilac of the beach;
A bluer grey, the waters reach
To where the horizon ends the sea.

Flushed with a tinge of dusky rose,
The clouds, a twilit lavender,
Flood the low sky, and duskier
The mist comes flooding in, and flows

Into the twilight of the land,
And darkness, coming softly down,
Rustles across the fading sand
And folds its arms about the town.

IX. REMEMBRANCE.

IT seems to me that very long ago,
Across a shining and dividing sea,
I dreamed of love, and the eternal woe,
And that desire which is eternity.

I did but dream that I have made you weep:
I never loved, and you have never wept.
The shining and dividing sea is deep,
And I am very tired of having slept.

Yet, in some hours of these oblivious days,
Suddenly, like a heart-throb, I recall
The passionate enigma of your face,
I take your hand, and I remember all.

X. SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

I CANNOT sleep, the slow hours steal
Lingering on a path of sighs;
All night against my sight I feel
The presence of her lips, her eyes.

Out of the empty night appear
All I have loved and feared and fled:
Those eyes that I most love and fear,
Those lips I most desire and dread.

Her eyes are strange to me, they smile
An older alien smile, not mine;
Her lips are laughing to beguile
My senses with a sorcerous wine.

Deep in the darkness of the night
She wavers to a fresh disguise;
Yet still there burns against my sight
The radiant malice of her eyes.

XI. ARQUES.

I.

NOON.

THE shadows of the rooks fly up the hill,
Up the green grass, and over the white wall;
The trees drowse in the sunlight; all is still;
Only the black rooks cry and call.

Out of the ruined castle, a slow crowd,
Their sultry wings against the sunlight beat;
They float across the valley like a cloud
Across the blue sky's cloudless heat.

Idly I watch them indolently fly,
And idly, like their wings, across my brain,
Drunken with sunlight, black-winged thoughts float by,
Pass, and return, and pass, and turn again.

II.

AFTERNOON.

GENTLY a little breeze begins to creep
Into the valley, and the sleeping trees
Are stirred, and breathe a little in their sleep,
And nod, half wakened, to the breeze.

Cool little quiet shadows wander out
Across the fields, and dapple with dark trails
The snake-grey road coiled stealthily about
The green hill climbing from the vales.

And faintlier, in this cooler peace of things,
My brooding thoughts, a scattered flock grown few,
Withdrawn upon their melancholy wings,
Float farther off against the blue.

III.

NIGHT.

THE darkness fills the hollows of the moat,
And rises up the valley, and comes down
From the low hills, and wicked white mists float
Like floods about the little town.

The night is all about me, crawling dark
Meshes the doubtful shadows of the way,
And all the woods and all the vales of Arques
Fade as the lamps put out the day.

Then in the darkness, face to face at last
With those winged thoughts that gather to their goal,
I feel their beaks and talons taking fast
Hold on my shivering soul.

XII. IN SAINT-JACQUES.

TIRED with the sunlight, her eyes close in prayer,
A little heap before a waxen saint;
Heaven above heaven, the starry hosts are there,
The wind of odorous wings, beating, breathes faint.

Ah, she is old, and the world's ways are rough,
She has grown old with sorrow, year by year;
She is alone: yet is it not enough
To be alone with God, as she is here?

Here, in the shadowy chapel, where I stand,
An alien, at the door, and see within
Bent head and benediction of the hand,
And may not, though I long to enter in.

Sightless, she sees the angels thronging her,
She sees descending on her from above
The Blessed Vision for her comforter:
But I can see no vision, only Love.

I have believed in Love, and Love's untrue:
Bid me believe, and bring me to your saint,
Woman! and let me come and kneel with you. . .
But I should see only the wax and paint.

XIII. THE VILLA EMILIA.

GATES that I never entered, under the shadow of trees,
Gates with the garden discreet behind the wall,
Is it here, O garden discreet, is it here after all,
Here, and behind your gates,
That the love of my life awaits
In a golden sleep the dawn of my coming, under the trees?

Under the quiet of trees the garden sleeps in the sun,
Sleeps, and awaits one day a wakening hand;
Is it I, O garden discreet, is it I shall stand
One day at the gate, and claim
Your princess in my name?
For she sleeps and awaits the appointed coming, sleeps in the sun.

Gates that I never entered, gates of my villa of dreams,
Is there a princess at all that your shadows keep
For her lover, O garden discreet, in a golden sleep?
Ah, if behind your gates
Only a shadow awaits
The shadowy love that I lay at your portals, villa of dreams!

XIV. THE WANDERERS.

WANDERING, ever wandering,
Their eyelids freshened with the wind of the sea
Blown up the cliffs at sunset, their cheeks cooled
With meditative shadows of hushed leaves
That have been drowsing in the woods all day,
And certain fires of sunrise in their eyes.

They wander, and the white roads under them
Crumble into fine dust behind their feet,
For they return not; life, a long white road,
Winds ever from the dark into the dark,
And they, as days, return not; they go on
For ever, with the travelling stars; the night
Curtains them, being wearied, and the dawn
Awakens them unwearied; they go on.
They know the winds of all the earth, they know
The dust of many highways, and the stones
Of cities set for landmarks on the road.
Theirs is the world, and all the glory of it,
Theirs, because they forego it, passing on
Into the freedom of the elements;
Wandering, ever wandering,
Because life holds not anything so good
As to be free of yesterday, and bound
Towards a new to-morrow; and they wend
Into a world of unknown faces, where
It may be there are faces waiting them,
Faces of friendly strangers, not the long
Intolerable monotony of friends.

The joy of earth is yours, O wanderers,
The only joy of the old earth, to wake,

As each new dawn is patiently renewed,
With foreheads fresh against a fresh young sky.
To be a little further on the road,
A little nearer somewhere, some few steps
Advanced into the future, and removed
By some few counted milestones from the past;
God gives you this good gift, the only gift
That God, being repentant, has to give.

Wanderers, you have the sunrise and the stars;
And we, beneath our comfortable roofs,
Lamplight, and daily fire upon the hearth,
And four walls of a prison, and sure food.
But God has given you freedom, wanderers!

III.

AMOR TRIUMPHANS.

I. ENVOI.

ALL that remains for me,
In this world, after this,
Is, but to take a kiss
For what a kiss should be;

To stake one's heart to win,
Yet have no heart to lose:
Now I am free to choose,
Now, let the game begin!

If my hand shakes and swerves
A little as I play,
Well, such a yesterday
Was trying for one's nerves.

But I am wary, see!
I know the game at last.
I know the past is past,
And what remains for me:

To play a lighter stake,
Nor lay one's heart above,
And to have done with love
For ever, for your sake.

II. WHY?

WHY is it, since I know you now
As light as any wanton is,
And, knowing, need not wonder how
You work that wonder of your kiss,
Why is it, since I know you now,

Still, in some corner of my brain,
There clings a lost, last, lingering
Doubt of my doubts of you again,
A foolish, unforgetting thing,
Still, in some corner of my brain?

Is it because your lips are soft,
And warm your hands, and strange your eyes,
That I believe again the oft
Repeated, oft permitted lies,
Because your lips are warm and soft?

For what you are I know you now,
For what it means I know your kiss;
Yet, knowing, need one wonder how,
Beneath your kisses, how it is,
Knowing you, I believe you now?

III. DISGUISES.

I DO not know you under this disguise :
I am degraded by your lips, your eyes.

O lips that I have kissed, as at God's feet,
I kiss you now, and you are only sweet.

O eyes where I have dwelt, as in a shrine,
Your shadowy incense is no longer mine.

Hands I have felt about my heart, I feel
Only your softness through my senses steal.

O rapture of lost days, all that remains
Is but this fever aching in my veins.

I do not know you under this disguise :
I am degraded by my memories.

IV. VAIN MEMORY.

THANK God, your memory's voice grows fainter, her face pale,
She haunts my sight no more along the misty ways;
Yet should young wandering joys beckon to me, she lays
Across the face of every joy a mournful veil.
I would but dance a measure lightly, and pass by,
I would but lay my head a moment on some breast;
But as I reach out piteous hands for hope or rest
She glides between, and keen desire and sweet dreams die.
Her hands are cold as death, and death is in her eyes,
Chilled by the breath that kills the life in me she seems.
Her heart is dead that was a heart of many dreams
My heart is dead that was a heart of many sighs.

V. THE RETURN.

A LITTLE hand is knocking at my heart,
And I have closed the door.
"I pray thee, for the love of God, depart
Thou shalt come in no more."

"Open, for I am weary of the way.
The night is very black.
I have been wandering many a night and day.
Open. I have come back."

The little hand is knocking patiently.
I listen, dumb with pain.
"Wilt thou not open any more to me?
I have come back again."

"I will not open any more. Depart.
I, that once lived, am dead."
The hand that had been knocking at my heart
Was still. "And I?" she said.

There is no sound, save, in the winter air,
The sound of wind and rain.
All that I loved in all the world stands there,
And will not knock again.

VI. THE BARREL-ORGAN.

ENIGMATICAL, tremulous,
Voice of the troubled wires,
What remembering desires
Wail to me, wandering thus
Up through the night with a cry,
Inarticulate, insane,
Out of the night of the street and the rain
Into the rain and the night of the sky?

Inarticulate voice of my heart,
Rusty, a worn-out thing,
Harsh with a broken string,
Mended, and pulled apart,
All the old tunes played through,
Fretted by hands that have played,
Tremulous voice that cries to me out of the shade,
The voice of my heart is crying in you.

VII. THE RELAPSE.

THE agony of love has taken hold of me,
Again, the intolerable agony of love;
And what shall be, when all is done, the end thereof?
There shall be no more end unto this agony.
But all the roses Love has plucked shall blossom fire,
And all the lilies Love has watered waste with tears,
And ghosts that once were hopes walk in the night as fears,
And hoped-for peace be born a desolate desire.
I have been strong, and conquered love, and shall this be?
Shall I return, shall all that was be as it was?
I shall return, I shall return, alas! because
The agony of love has taken hold of me.

VIII. THE DANCE.

FOR the immortal moment of a passionate dance,
Surely our two souls rushed together and were one,
Once, in the beat of our winged feet in unison,
When, in the brief and flaming ardour of your glance,
The world withered away, vanishing into smoke;
The world narrowed about us, and we heard the beat
As of the rushing winds encompassing our feet;
In the blind heart of the winds, eternal silence woke,
And, cast adrift on our unchainable ecstasy,
Once, and once only, heart to heart and soul to soul,
For an immortal moment we endured the whole
Rapture of intolerable immortality.

IX. THE SILENCE.

O VOICES of Love's silences
Exultant in my heart to-day,
You cry to me from far away,
Yet nearer than my heart to me,
Because the voice of silence is
The whisper of eternity.

A little while a little speech
Is ours to speak of mortal things,
But when the rustling of his wings
Betrays the Immortal Presence near,
What our hearts answer each to each
Only the silence dares to hear.

X. THE BARGAIN.

I CALLED upon your soul,
Once, and I named your name,
Once, and I bade your soul
Come, at my will's control,
Body and soul at your name,
Come : then you came.

For your soul you asked no price,
For your heart you asked but a loan ;
Yet I paid for your soul the price
Of a living sacrifice,
Yet I lent for your heart no loan,
I gave you my own.

I call upon your name,
Now, and I claim your soul,
Still ; for all time I claim
Body and soul in my name.
Have I not paid the whole
Price for your soul ?

XI. AFTER ROMEO AND JULIET.

LOVE, where the summer night is ripe and odorous,
Flushed with the spilt wine of the golden hearted stars,
Out of the garden's dusk and those funereal bars
I hear the voice of Romeo, Juliet calling us
Unto the marriage-grave of love's too keen delight;
And in the voice of Juliet I have heard the cry
(O heart, to put on passion's immortality!)
Of your wild heart to mine, under a winter night.
Out of the winter night a little light is born,
Yet still in shadowy ways our love goes wandering,
Our heavy-hearted pilgrim love, a way-worn thing,
Faint, though the sky is brightening to the breaking morn.

XII. CHOPIN.

O PASSIONATE music beating the troubled beat
I have heard in my heart, in the wind, in the passing of feet,
In the passing of dreams, when on heart-throbbing wings they move;
O passionate music pallid with ghostly fears,
Chill with the coming of rain, the beginning of tears,
I come to you, fleeing you, finding you, fever of love!

When I am sleepless at night and I play through the night,
Lest I hear a voice, lest I see, appealing and white,
The face that never, in dreams or at dawn, departs,
Then it is, shuddering music my hands have played,
I find you, fleeing you, finding you, music, made
Of all passionate, wounded, capricious, consuming hearts!

XIII. LOVE'S HATRED.

I HAVE flung down a plummet in Hate's well :
I hate you worse than any words can tell.
With every little nerve I hate you so,
My body aches with it. I would have you go
A fiery way beyond the ultimate
Rim of the world, that I might feed my hate
With the long, slow, persistent following
Of that uncapturable, vanishing thing,
Your soul, to be a prey unto my hands.
I would be near you, do your least commands,
Serve you with every poison you desire;
And of your torment in eternal fire
My soul would endure joyfully the whole :
Because I love you more than my own soul.

XIV. THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

SHE wanders through the city like a troubled ghost,
And where she passes her eyes light the lingering fire
Of a consuming, void, inexorable desire ;
She passes, the Destroying Angel of Love's host.
Her heart is as a little loving woman's heart,
Her hands are full of pity, and of love her eyes ;
Yet at her look there withers, at her touch there dies,
The lily of peace, love's flower that life has set apart.
Alluring, pale, she passes; and to her control
The kingdoms of men's strength are given ; and none can trace
In the Destroying Angel's pale alluring face
A hungering heart, a silent proud appealing soul.

XV. NEW YEAR'S EVE.

WE heard the bells of midnight burying the year.
Then the night poured its silent waters over us.
And then, in the vague darkness, faint and tremulous,
Time paused; then the night filled with sound; morning was here.
Time paused; our hearts were silent; only your eyes burned
Out of the night as though lit to consume my heart.
The insane anger of love seized and became a part
Of your incarnate spirit; and your spirit yearned
In such an agonizing ecstasy of desire
Unto my spirit waiting to be lost in you,
Spirit to spirit was fused in flame; and neither knew,
In that transfiguring ardency of perfect fire,
Body from body, spirit from spirit, life from death.
Only we knew, as flaming silence wrapt the past,
We had escaped the shadowy labyrinth at last;
Only we knew, as brooding silence, like the breath
Of the overshadowing wings of the creating Dove,
Descended on our hearts, and filled our hearts with peace,
Love, born to be immortal, until all time cease
Was born of us anew, to be immortal love.

XVI. THE PAUSE.

TROUBLE has come upon us like a sudden
cloud,
A sudden summer cloud with thunder in
its wings.
There is an end for us of old familiar things
Now that this desolating voice has spoken aloud.
I look out on the world with blind eyes seeking you
In old familiar places where your feet have been.
I see a white face wavering, and all between
Mist, and I hear the sound of a voice sighing adieu!
Love was immortal yesterday : can love abate
One instant's ardour since to-day was yesterday?
Yesterday I was very sure of love : to-day
I look out on the world wonderingly, and wait.

IV.

MUNDI VICTIMA.

MUNDI VICTIMA.

I.

HENCEFORTH for each of us remains the world.
The gates have closed behind us, we are hurled
From the fixed paradise of our content
Into an outer world of banishment,
And, in this anger of the garden's Lord,
His serene angel with the fiery sword
Has yet more pitilessly cast us forth,
You by the gate that looks upon the North
And I by the gate looking on the South.
And so the lamentations of your mouth
I shall not hear, nor tears for this distress
Water my hours' unwatered barrenness.
For love is ended, love that was to be
Endless; nay, love endures perpetually,
But I shall never kiss your lips again,
Nor hold your hand, nor feel your arms enchain
Body and soul in one extreme embrace,
Nor find again the kingdom of your face.
For I have lost you, you return no more.
And I have lost in you the years before
You gathered all my years within the glance
Of your supreme and triumphing countenance,
And all the years whose desultory flame
Shall yet smoke flickeringly after them.
Passion has burnt itself clean out for you.
I go back empty-hearted, to renew
The unprofitable, the vain following
Of every vain, unprofitable thing;
You, with all seemly wishes satisfied,

Go forth to be the most unhappy bride
The sun shall shine upon in rich men's halls.
Hearken, I hear a voice, a voice that calls ;
What shall remain for him? sadly it cries :
Desolate years, eternal memories.
And what for her? it cries, it cries with tears :
Eternal memories, desolate years.

II.

If the astrologers speak truth, who tell
That the stars make for us our heaven and hell,
My passionate and perverse horoscope,
Where the intellectual forces may not cope
With Scorpio, Herschel, Venus, and the Moon,
Marked in my life that love in me should swoon
Into the arms of strange affinities.
It was myself looked at me with your eyes,
Where Venus and the Moon with Herschel strove
In some ambiguous paradox of love.
When first I touched your hand I felt the thrill
Knit heart to heart, and at the touch your will
Became as my will, and my will became
As your will, and an unappeasable flame
Was lighted when your lips and mine first met
In that long kiss my lips shall not forget
When I am aged with eternity.
I knew that my desire had come to me,
And that the world was ended and begun,
And I should never more beneath the sun
Go lightly forth on any wayfaring.
I knew that I should suffer for this thing,
For this completion of the impossible,

This mystical marriage of heaven and hell,
With anguish and with extreme agony,
Knowing that my desire had come to me.

III.

I gaze upon your portrait in my hand.
And slowly, in a dream, I see you stand
Silent before me, with your pressing gaze
Of enigmatic calm, and all your face
Smiling with that ironical repose
Which is the weariness of one who knows.
Dare I divine, then, what your visage dreams,
So troubled and so strangely calm it seems?
Consuming eyes consenting to confess
The extreme ardour of their heaviness,
The lassitude of passionate desires
Denied, pale smoke of unaccomplished fires;
Ah! in those shell-curved, purple eyelids bent
Towards some most dolorous accomplishment,
And in the painful patience of the mouth,
(A sundered fruit that waits, in a great drouth,
One draught of living water from the skies)
And in the carnal mystery of the eyes,
And in the burning pallor of the cheeks;
Voice of the Flesh! this is the voice that speaks,
In agony of spirit, or in grief
Because desire dare not desire relief.

IV.

I have known you, I have loved you, I have lost.
Here in one woman I have found the host
Of women, and the woman of all these
Who by her strangeness had the power to please
The strangeness of my difficult desires;
And here the only love that never tires
Even with the monotony of love.
It was your strangeness I was amorous of,
Mystery of variety, that, being known, yet does
Leave you still infinitely various,
And leave me thirsting still, still wondering
At your unknowable and disquieting
Certainty of a fixed uncertainty.
And thus I knew that you were made for me,
For I have always hated to be sure,
And there is nothing I could less endure
Than a fond woman whom I understood.
I never understood you: mood by mood
I watched you through your changes manifold,
As the star-gazing shepherd from his fold
Watches the myriad changes of the moon.
Is not love's mystery the supreme boon?
Ah rare, scarce hoped-for, longed-for, such a goal
As this most secret and alluring soul!
Your soul I never knew, I guessed at it,
A dim abode of what indefinite
And of what poisonous possibilities!
Your soul has been a terror to mine eyes,
Even as my own soul haunts me, night and day,
With voices that I cannot drive away,
And visions that I scarce can see and live.
And you, from your own soul a fugitive,
Have you not fled, did not your pride disown

The coming of a soul so like your own,
Eyes that you fancied read you, yet but drew
Unknown affinities, yourself from you,
And hands that held your destiny, because
The power that held you in them, yours it was?
Did you not hate me, did you not in vain
Avoid me and repel me and refrain?
Was not our love fatal to you and me,
The rapture of a tragic ecstasy
Between disaster and disaster, given
A moment's space, to be a hell in heaven?
Love, being love indeed, could be no less,
For us, than an immortal bitterness,
A blindness and a madness, and the wave
Of a great sea that breaks and is a grave.
Ah, more to us than many prosperous years,
So brief a rapture and so many tears;
To have won, amid the tumults round about,
The shade of a great silence from the shout
Of the world's battles and the idle cry
Of those vain faiths for which men live and die!
And have we not tasted the very peace
So passionate an escape must needs release,
Being from the world so strangely set apart,
The inmost peace that is the whirlpool's heart?

v.

Let me remember when you loved me best.
When the intolerable rage possessed
The spirit of your senses, and the breath
As of the rushing of the winds of death
Rapt you from earth, and in a fiery trance

Exalted your transfigured countenance
And bade your heart be rapturously still?
Or in the holy silence of that thrill
Which stirs the little heart of grass, and swings
The worlds upon their windy chariotings?
Or in the haunted trouble of those deep
Enchantments of your visionary sleep,
Ardent with dreams, and the delicious strife
Of phantoms passionate with waking life?
Or when, as a fond mother o'er her child,
You bent above me, and the mother smiled
Upon the man re-born to be her own,
Flesh of her very flesh, bone of her bone?
Of all your kisses which supremest one
Out of the immeasurable million?
Or which denied, as on a certain day
You tremulously turned your lips away,
And I, who wronged you, thinking you unkind,
Found it love's penance for a troubled mind,
Grieved it had done some little wrong to love?
Out of your silences which most did move
The eternal heart of silence, ancient peace?
Or did you love me best, and then increase
The best with better, till at last we stood,
As he who was love's laureate in each mood
Of passionate communion, bids us stand,
First among lovers when but hand in hand?

VI.

It is all over, I am left alone.
O visiting ghost, these eyes have never known
So cold, calm, tearless, proud, dispassionate,

Desperate, desolate, importunate,
Whose wrong denied you life, and rent from me
Your love, to be this ghost of memory?
Not yours, though you have left me; and not mine,
Though I have bade you leave me: the divine
Right of the world's injustice, and that old
Tyranny of dumb, rooted things, which hold
The hearts of men in a hard bondage. Yet,
Not for the world's sake, let me not forget
That, in the world's eyes, I have done you wrong.
And since to the world's judgment must belong
The saving and damnation of all souls
Whom that usurped sovereignty controls,
Indeed I have done you wrong. I loved you more
Than your own soul. I had not loved before,
And love possessed me, fixed my wandering mind,
And drove me onward, heedless, deaf, and blind,
Wrapt in the fiery whirlwind, passion, drove
Life to annihilation upon love.
I had not loved before: I had been love's lord,
I had delicately feasted at the board
Where Folly's guests luxuriously admire
Each dainty waiting handmaiden desire;
Where, when the feast is over, choice is free.
I had feasted long, I had chosen riotously,
Kisses, and roses, and warm scented wine,
I had bound my forehead with the tangled vine,
I had bound about my heart the tangled hair
Of laughing light loves; I had found love fair,
Of delicate aspect, and free from guile,
And I had bartered kisses for a smile,
And my vine-wreath for poppies twined for sleep,
And of a sleepy bowl I had drunk deep,

And, dreaming, never dreamed that hearts could ache,
For over-much desire, or for love's sake.
And then you came. The rose of yesterday
Petal by petal drooped, withering away,
And all my bright flowers drooped, withering dead,
And the vine-wreath had fallen from my head,
And the wine-red poppies dripped to earth, and spilled
The bowl of sleep, and all the air was filled,
As with the fluttering voices of soft doves,
With lamentations of the little loves.
Then a new life was born of the last breath
Of that which never lived; I knew that death
Which love is, ere it is eternity.
And then I knew that love, I had thought so fair,
Is terrible of aspect, and heavy care
Follows the feet of love where'er he goes,
And lovers' hearts, because of many woes,
Ache sorer than all hearts most desolate,
And dearest love works most the work of hate.

VII.

The world has taken you, the world has won.
In vain against the world's dominion
We fought the fight of love against the world.
For since about the tree of knowledge curled
The insidious snake, the snake's voice whispering
Has poisoned every fair and fruitful thing.
Did not the world's voice treacherously move
Even your fixed soul? Did you not hold our love
Guilty of its own ardour, and the immense

Sacrifice to its own omnipotence
A sacrilege and not a sacrifice?
Even in our love our love could not suffice
(Not the rapt silence whose warm wings abound
With all the holy plenitude of sound,
At love's most shadowy and hushed hour of day)
To keep the voices of the world away.
O subtle voices, luring from the dream
The dreamer, till love's very vision seem
The unruffled air that phantom feet have crossed
In the mute march of that processional host
Whose passing is the passing of the wind;
Avenging voices, hurrying behind
The souls that have escaped, and yet look back
Reluctantly along the flaming track;
O mighty voices of the world, I have heard
Between our heart-beats your reiterate word,
And I have felt our heart-beats slackening.

VIII.

Love, to the world, is the forbidden thing;
And rightly, for the world is to the strong,
And the world's honour and increase must belong
To the few mighty triumphing through hate
And to the many meek who humbly wait
The grudging wage of daily drudgery.
The world is made for hate, for apathy,
For labouring greed that mines the earth for gold,
And sweats to gather dust into its hold;
Is not the world bought for a little dust?
Kingdoms are shaken from their ancient trust,
And kingdoms stablished upon treacheries;

Under the temple-roof of the same skies
The stones of altars older than their gods
Are beaten down, and in the old abodes
The smoke of a new incense blinds the stars;
The rind of the earth is eaten up by wars,
As a rat, gnawing, leaves a mouldering heap;
And the world drowses in a downy sleep,
The world being sworn confederate with success.
Yet will it pardon the forgetfulness
Of laughing loves that linger but a night
In the soft perfumed chambers of delight.
How should it pardon love? love whose intent
Is from the world to be in banishment,
Love that admits but fealty to one,
Love that is ever in rebellion.
The world is made for dutiful restraint,
Its martyrs are the lover and the saint,
All whom a fine and solitary rage
Urges on some ecstatic pilgrimage
In search of any Holy Sepulchre.
The lover is a lonely voyager
Over great seas and into lonely lands,
He speaks a tongue which no man understands,
Much given to silence, no good citizen,
His utmost joy to be apart from men,
For his creating mind has given birth,
God-like, to a new heaven and a new earth;
Where, if he dwell apart or in the crowd,
He talks with angels in a fiery cloud
Upon the mount of vision all his days.
Therefore the world, beholding in his face
Only the radiance of reflected light
Left by that incommunicable sight,
Which to the dim eyes of the world may seem
But the marsh-glimmer of a fevered dream,

Bids love renounce love, or be cast aside.
Has not the world's hate ever crucified,
From age to age, rejoicing in its loss,
Love on the same inevitable cross,
In every incarnation from above
Of the redeeming mystery of love?

IX.

The world has taken you, the world has won.
Accursed be the world! Was it well done
To give the world, once more, its victory?
Was it well done to let you go from me?
For your own sake I suffered you to go.
Did I do right, for your sake? Say not no,
Say not that I have left you to your fate,
That I have made my own life desolate,
Casting adrift upon a shoreless tide,
While you, blind, shipwrecked, and without a guide,
Fasting and footsore, desolately went
Across an undiscovered continent.
Should I have held you fast, in spite of all?
Perchance. Yet it was well, whate'er befall,
To have renounced love, merely for love's sake.
Ah, when in lonely nights I lie awake,
And hear the windy voices of the rain,
At least I shall not hear your voice complain
"If you had loved me, you had let me go!"
Have we not loved and sorrowed? and we know
It is well to have loved and sorrowed and not striven,
And to endure hell, having passed through heaven,
To know what heaven is, having passed through hell.
Love's moment is a moment of farewell,

Sorrow and weariness are all our years,
And life is full of sighing, and much tears.

x.

What shall your life be in the years to come?
The world, that recks not of love's martyrdom,
Shall praise in you a weary passionate face,
Where tears and memories have left their trace,
Into a finer beauty fashioning
Your beauty, ever an unquiet thing.
You shall have riches: jewels shall be brought
From the earth's ends to please a wandering thought,
And the red heart of rubies shall suspire
To kiss your fingers, and the inner fire
That wastes the diamond's imprisoned soul
Shall flame upon your brows, an aureole,
And your white breast shall be devoutly kissed
By the pale fasting lips of amethyst,
And the cold purity of pearls enmesh
Your throat that keeps my kisses in its flesh.
Your beauty shall be clothed in raiment fit
For the high privilege, to cover it;
You shall be served ere any wish arise
With more than had seemed meet in your own eyes;
You shall be shielded lest the sun should light
A rose too red on cheeks that blossom white;
You shall be shielded from the wind that may
Tangle a tress delicately astray;
You shall be fenced about with many friends;
You shall be brought to many journeys' ends
By leisured stages; what was mine of old
Shall now be yours, cities and skies of gold,
And golden waters, and the infinite

Renewal of the myriad-vested night.
Where cool stars tesselated the lagoon,
In Venice, under some old April moon,
Shall not some April, too, for you be lit
By the same moon that then wept over it?
Shall you not drive beneath the boulevard trees
In that young Paris where I lived at ease?
And you shall see the women I have known,
Before your voice called me to be your own
Out of that delicate, pale, lilac air.
And all this you shall find, as I did, fair,
And all this you shall find, as now I find,
Withered as leaves a ruinous winter wind
Casts in the face of any summer's guest
Revisiting some valley of old rest.
You will remember me in all these things,
I shall go with you in your wanderings,
I shall be nearer to you, far away,
Than he who holds you by him, night and day;
Close let him hold you, close: what can he do?
For am I not the heart that beats in you?
And if, at night, you hear beside your bed
The night's slow trampling hours with ceaseless tread
Bearing the haggard corpse of morning on,
You shall cry in vain for sleep's oblivion,
Haunted by that unsleeping memory
That wakes and watches with you ceaselessly.
What shall your life be? Loneliness, regret,
A weary face beside a hearthstone set,
A weary head upon a pillow laid
Heavier than sleep; pale lips that are afraid
Of some betraying smile, and eyes that keep
Their haunting memory strangled in its sleep.
"O mother!" is it I who hear you cry?

"O mother! mother!" is it only I?
"O my lost lover!" shall she not, even she,
Hear, and one moment pity you and me?
She must not hear, only the silence must
Share in the jealous keeping of that trust.
And when, perchance, telling some idle thing,
Your husband rests his finger on my ring;
When your eye rests upon the casket where
My letters keep the scent of days that were,
My verses keep the perfume that was yours,
And the key tells you how my love endures;
When you shall read of me, shall hear my name,
On idle lips, in idle praise or blame;
Ah, when the world, perhaps, some day shall cry
My name with a great shouting to the sky;
You must be silent, though your eyes, your cheek,
Will answer for your heart, you must not speak,
Though you would gladly dare a thousand harms
To cry "The joy of life was in his arms!"
Though you would give up all to cry one cry:
"I loved him, I shall love him till I die,
I am the man you tell of, he is I!"

XI.

I write this for the world's eye, yet for one.
When she shall hear of me, and not alone,
Let her know always that my heart is hers,
As it was always. If my fancy errs
Into strange places, wildly following
The flying track of any flitting thing,
If I recapture any cast aside
Garlands, or twine for roses that have died
Fresh roses, or bid flower-soft arms entwine

My forehead flushed with some bewildering wine,
Then let her know that I am most forlorn.
There is no penance harder to be borne
Than, amid happy faces and the voice
Of revellers who in revelling rejoice,
To hear one's own sad heart keep time in vain
With some sad unforgotten old refrain.
For me, the world's eternal silence dwells
Not in the peace of those ecstatic cells
Where recollection goes the way of prayer
Into the void, the welcoming void air,
But here, in these bright crowds to be alone.
Then let her know that I am most her own!
Yet, if it might but save my soul from her,
O come to me, Folly the Comforter,
Fling those wild arms around me, take my hand,
And lead me back to that once longed-for land,
Where it is always midnight, and the light
Of many tapers has burnt out the night,
And swift life finds no moment set apart
For rest, and the seclusion of the heart,
And the return of any yesterday.
Come to me, Folly, now, take me away;
I will be faithful to you until death
Puff out this wavering and unsteady breath.
Folly, the bride of such unhappy men
As I am, were you not my mistress, when,
Love having not yet chosen me to be proud,
I followed all the voices of the crowd?
But I forsook you: I return anew,
And for my bride I claim, I capture you.
Folly, I will be faithful to you now.
I will pluck all your roses for my brow,
And, with the thorns of ruined roses crowned,
I will drink every poison life has found

In the enchantments that your fingers brew.
Finally I commend myself to you,
Multitudinous senses : carry me
Upon your beating wings where I may see
The world and all the glory of the world,
And bid my soul from lust to lust be hurled,
Endlessly, precipitously, on.
Only in you is there oblivion,
Multitudinous senses ; in your fire
I light and I exterminate desire.
Though it cry all night long, shall I not steep
My sorrow in the fever of your sleep ?
Where, if no phantom with faint fingers pale
Beckon to me, wildly, across the veil
Of the dim waving of her sorcerous hair,
I may yet find your very peace, despair !
Benignant principalities and powers
Of evil, powers of the world's abysmal hours,
Take me and make me yours : I am yours : O take
The sacrifice of soul and body, break
The mould of this void spirit, scatter it
Into the vague and shoreless infinite,
Pour it upon the restless arrogant
Winds of tumultuous spaces ; grant, O grant
That the loosed sails of this determinate soul
Hurry it to disaster, and the goal
Of swiftest shipwreck ; that this soul descend
The unending depths until oblivion end
In self-oblivion, and at last be lost
Where never any other wandering ghost,
Voyaging from other worlds remembered not,
May find it and remind of things forgot.

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